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T H E
CHRISTIAN REMEMBRANCER;
OR, THE
GOSPEL MINISTER'S WORK,
AND THE
CHURCH'S WARNING.

BEING SOME OF THE
LAST SERMONS
PREACHED BY THE
LATE REV. BENJAMIN MESSER,
Pastor of the Church in Grafton Street.

He being dead yet speaketh. HEB. xi. 4.

L O N D O N :

Printed for G. KEITH, in Talbot Court, Grace-
Church-street; J. JOHNSON, at No. 72, in St.
Paul's Church Yard; A. BELL, in Aldgate; and
J. MATTHEWS, in the Strand.

MDCCCLXXIII.

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MDCCLXXII

S E R M O N I.

2 P E T. i. 13.

Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this Tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance.

AS the Lord has spared me to this day, and brought me forth once more to speak his word to you; having your good much at heart, and believing that I am not long for this world, I have, I trust, by the assistance and leading influence of the blessed Spirit, fixt upon this text, as what appears necessary both for you and me at this season. May you be taught by it, if it be the will of God, when time with me shall be no more; then the remembrance of what may be now delivered will have a pleasing influence for your future edification.

In opening the words I shall,

1. Consider the description here given of man, as dwelling in a tabernacle.
2. Point out the duty of every minister whilst he is in the body, and capable of it;

to stir up the people, by putting them in remembrance.

3. Assign the reasons why this becomes apparently the duty of every gospel minister? On each of these, as the Lord shall give strength and liberty, I would offer a few remarks, and O ! that the Holy Ghost may bless the word to both you and me, that we may indeed be stirred up to a remembrance of the best things, the things that make for our everlasting peace and happiness. To which end let us,

I. Consider the description here given of man, as dwelling in a tabernacle. By which the human body, this frail and tottering clay is intended ; in which we must abide for a few years, months, or days, as the great and Sovereign Ruler hath ordained ; but what period is allotted for our sojournment in these tabernacles is known only to the great Disposer of all events.

In treating of this head two things will naturally occur, and each of them I shall attempt to speak of with all the brevity I can.

1. The people who are here addressed, and whom the apostle saw meet to stir up by putting in remembrance.

2. Point

2. Point out some lessons which we are taught by our transitory state, as dwelling in tabernacles of clay.

First, then, the people to whom this address is made, and who the apostle saw meet to stir up by putting them in remembrance, are the children of God, by adoption and grace ; as appears from ver. 1. where they are said to have part in the righteousness of God our Saviour. *To them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* Being partakers of like precious faith with the apostles, evidenceth their sonship or filial relation to God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, whose person blood and righteousness are the only, the uninterrupted channels of grace to the souls of men. If we were not justified through his righteousness and redemption, we could never have received the gift of faith, nor any of the blessings of grace ; but must have remained for ever under the curse of a broken and abused law.

2. In verse 2, the apostle prays for their increase of grace, which naturally supposeth them already possessed of that hea-

venly blessing : for how could he pray for that to be increased and multiplied, which they never had ? Had he been writing to people in a carnal state, he might have prayed that God would give them his grace ; but not that it might be increased and multiplied till actually received. If possessors of the grace of God, it must follow, that they were his people elect, redeemed, and called ; as is still more clear from verse 3, where the power by which we have received like precious faith, the knowledge of God, and all things pertaining to life and godliness, is expressly called divine, alluding to the almighty power of the Holy Ghost, by which we are called and taught the things of God, which no man, nor any other creature, could do either for himself or others.

3. It is farther apparent from verse 4, That God's believing people are here addressed, seeing that unto them are said to have been given exceeding great and precious promises *, that by them we might be partakers of a divine nature—not of the divine Essence, for that is incommunicable, and therefore cannot be ; but of a divine prin-

* *Vid.* Tit. i. 2.

principle of grace, which comes from the Holy Ghost as a divine person. His sacred influence alone can lead us to see and understand the things of God, which to the carnal mind appear as darkness and absurdity, and which none but the Spirit of God can reveal; seeing none but the Spirit knoweth the deep things of God, none but the Spirit renovates the heart of a sinner*. We are told by the holy apostle, that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his, and surely a stronger evidence of adoption, than a being led by the Spirit, cannot be necessary, cannot be possible. It is only, because ye were sons, that God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father †.

4. Moreover, from the exhortations given from the 5th down to the 9th verse, their character is fixt as believers in Jesus: for he that has no faith, can never be called to add to that which he has not. But here faith is supposed as the foundation of experimental religion laid in the heart by the operation of God the Spirit, and they are called to build upon it, virtue, knowledge,

* John iii. 3. 5. † Gal. iv. 6.

ledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity. To pretend to these without a living divine faith, a faith of the operation of God, is like building a castle in the air, or a fabric without a foundation, which would be unbecoming a wise master builder, such as was this holy apostle.

5. The sad estate of those professors who are destitute of these things, the abundance of which believers are called to seek after, makes the difference between the one and the other obvious. They are blind, to themselves; to their danger on account of sin; to Christ and the love of God through him; to the blessed Spirit, and his saving work upon the soul in the day of regeneration and conversion. They have forgotten that they were purged from their old sins—by way of external reformation and profession, and so return again to the world and carnal enjoyments, like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. These are very unlike to a poor fallen believer, who, although he may be sickly and weak, is not dead; although dark and benighted in his frame, is not blind in his understanding; although

although ensnared by sin, cannot wallow in fleshly delights as his native element.

6. Their filial relation to a covenant God is undoubtedly implied in the charge given them, ver. 10. To give diligence to make their calling and election sure ; which could not be done if their calling and election were not in being. This diligence to which they are called, is not supposed to have any influence upon their personal election, which is eternal, and entirely an immanent act of the infinite mind. Nor upon our effectual calling out of darkness into marvellous light, as that is owing solely to the sovereign agency of the Holy Ghost, whose influences have quickened every believer, and whose grace is al sufficient to secure his own work. But this making sure, respects our views of personal interest in electing and calling grace ; and the evidence to others of our interest in them, which evidence is to be borne only by an holy religious conversation. In this case the gospel, and its precious doctrines, are not received in word only, but in faith, in power, and in much assurance ; and the apostle's main design, and leading desire in this passage seems to be,
that

that if it were the will of God they might live, and die under the comforting influences of that religion of which they made profession, as appears by the eleventh verse. He addresseth them not as dead and incapable of hearing ; but as living, and under divine influences, capable of improving their blessed privileges, and walking worthy of the vocation by which they were called : to which he here stimulates them by this warm exhortation ; and to which, he deems it meet to stir them up by putting them in remembrance. May the few days that I may be longer with you, be thus employed ; and may you bear in remembrance the precious truths which have often comforted us together, and upon which alone, in the hand of the Holy Ghost, we may rely with comfort on the solemn day of approaching dissolution. Which leads me,

II. To consider this body under the notion of a tabernacle, that must be taken down when the soul shall be called to a more comfortable and permanent dwelling ; even the peaceful mansions of rest, felicity and glory. This tabernacle is the workmanship of the Most High, curiously wrought

wrought and set up for a time limited, by a certain number of days and months, which are appointed for us who inhabit them. During that period they shall stand, though an host should encamp about them, with a view to lay them in ruins; that period elapsed, all the power of medicine will no longer render the body tenable. At that appointed time we must lay down these tabernacles, for in this war there is no discharge. It was well said of the ancients, "Here we have no continuing city", seeing they all dwelt only in tabernacles as we do now; and we, as they did in their day, are looking out for an house whose builder and maker is God.

2. This body is made up, like a tabernacle, of various parts and materials, curiously wrought, adjusted with the nicest propriety, and strictest mechanism, so that there is neither defect nor redundancy apparent in the grand design: but the execution of it is every way worthy of the Almighty Creator. The contemplation of this curious system made holy David in the profoundest admiration exclaim, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made; curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth".

And

And for what purpose? Not surely that we should prostitute its curious organs to vile pollution, but that they may be fit instruments of these immortal spirits which inhabit them—And our souls being born again, that these bodies of ours should be the temples of the Holy Ghost. Your bodies, as well as your souls, believers, are the Redeemer's purchase, therefore ye are called to glorify him with our souls and bodies, which are his. Ye are God's workmanship, God's building, O that ye may be an habitation for God through the Spirit.

3. These tabernacles are set up in the wilderness, and are only to accommodate us during our passage through life to a vast eternity. Israel dwelt in tents in the wilderness, but had houses and cities to dwell in when they reached Canaan. You also believers are in a wilderness situation, travelling towards your Father's house; you dwell therefore at present only in tents like Israel; tents that must be taken down when your journey is finished; then instead of tabernacles ye shall have houses to dwell in; houses paved with love and
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cieled glory, where pain and sorrow shall never be remembered but as waters that are passed away.

But awful is the consideration ! The wicked, the insensible, the Christless sinner is also a traveller ; but whither ? To what end is the important question ? Woe to you that live and die without Christ ; for ye are travelling to the land of inexpressible horror ; to the regions of dark despair. You are leaving all good behind you, and all evil is approaching. You will have troubles unmixt ; sorrow without any alleviation. Awful beyond expression will that day be when the dye is cast, when the gulph is fixed, and all that remains for you, to an endless eternity, is the wrath of an angry God, without any mixture, without mitigation. Then, in the ravings of wild despair, will you exclaim, “ The summer of means is over, the gospel harvest is ended, and we are not saved, nor gathered with the elect ”. O that God may give you grace seriously to reflect on your situation, and to turn to the Lord by faith and repentance.

4. Whilst we are at home in this wilderness state, we are absent from Christ, called to wander from place to place, fatigued with our journey, having to carry our tabernacles with all their appendages, along with us wherever we go. Therefore it is said, that "We who are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." So burdened, that sometimes we would rather choose to be absent from the body, that we might be present with the Lord". But these are our happy moments, when we are blessed with particular discoveries of the love of God, are more than ordinarily favoured with the drawing influences of the holy Spirit, and are under self-aborrence, on account of our sinfulness. At other times our souls cleave to the dust, and we dread the putting off these tabernacles; in some sense prefer the wilderness to Canaan, and choose time rather than eternity. Wretched choice! To prefer a pea to a pearl, and a pebble to a diamond, falls infinitely short in point of folly. O, for grace to embolden us to look chearfully down into the gloomy caverns of the tomb, and joyfully up to the mansions of felicity and glory.

5. Be-

5. Believers, your bodies are as tabernacles pitched, not for your own use only, but an habitation for God through the Spirit, and so your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, even as the Jewish temple of old was the residence of his sacred presence. In these temples of living stone the Holy Ghost dwells, to comfort, direct and assist in every spiritual engagement and exercise, making intercession for the saints according to the will of God *. In vain are all pretensions to prayer, and spiritual worship, without the influence of the Holy Ghost. Where God the Spirit is not, it must be dead, and not a living sacrifice, and therefore can never be acceptable to him, who requires to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. But where the Comforter has taken up his residence, he leads to Jesus the seat and channel of mercy, and thro' him to the Father: he helps the poor believer to confess his sinfulness, and to groan out acceptable and prevailing prayer, to God who hears the sighs of the contrite; whereas the sacrifices of the

B wicked

* Rom. viii. 27,

wicked and unregenerate are as the cutting off a dog's neck, the offering of swine's flesh, and the pouring out broth of abominable things, an abhorrence to the Majesty of heaven.

Look then to it that you have the Spirit of Christ, renewing and sanctifying your frame, and assisting you in every duty of the Christian life. This is a point of the last importance, and it behoves you to be determined in it.

If the Lord has given his holy Spirit to you, there are some rules by which it will be discovered. For instance you will,

1. See your own lost and undone condition, as poor perishing sinners, under the curse of a broken law, in bondage to the legal covenant, as well as by nature under the power and dominion of sin : for it is the province of the Holy Ghost to convince the world of sin ; and a painful sensation of soul on account of our natural wretchedness, is one of the first symptoms of divine life infused into the sinner's heart.

2. If the Holy Spirit dwelleth in you, you will be convinced, that there is none other name given under heaven amongst men,
by

which you can be saved, but that of Jesus Christ; and that if you are not found in him, clothed with his righteousness, and washed in his blood, you must everlastingly perish, there being salvation in none other.

3. The same Spirit will so far reveal Christ in your hearts, as to convince you of the fulness, all-sufficiency, and suitability of his salvation, it being his province to take of the things that are Christ's, and show them to his subjects; thus enlightening them in the knowledge of Jesus, as the sinners only hope and refuge.

4. If the Spirit of the Lord dwelleth in you, he razeth every sandy foundation, destroyeth every subterfuge, and sweeps away every refuge of lies, so that no longer dare you to trust in man, or to make flesh your arm. You see that Ashur cannot save you; the works of your own hands can no longer bear your dependance; but you are made to hope and trust in Jesus only, for present and future salvation.

5. You will be sensible, that unless you are drawn you cannot run, that without Jesus you can do nothing; can neither will

nor do, but as the Lord is pleased to work in you of his good pleasure. Yet, when drawn by the influence of the Holy Ghost, that you run with delight, your souls cleave to God, even to the living God; then wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. The language of your hearts will be, "Draw me, we will run after thee*."

What shall I say now to you who forget God? Your estate is truly awful and alarming. You live, perhaps, altogether without prayer, without God and Christ in the world. If you do at all pray, it is merely formal, hypocritical, and on a selfish legal foundation. You are strangers to sin's malignancy, and your own personal danger; strangers to soul distress, and godly repentance. You are strangers to real comfort, as flowing from free grace, and a finished salvation by Jesus Christ. You know no changes of frame, and therefore you fear not the holy and just God, notwithstanding he hath declared, that all that are far from him shall perish. O may the Lord, if it be his blessed will, give you

* Song i. 3.

you a sense of your sin and danger, that you may turn to him by faith and repentance, lest he come in the day of his anger, and tear you to pieces in his indignation !

This subject eventually opens up before you, in whose heart the fear of the Lord is, a most pleasing prospect. I say eventually ; because these tabernacles must first be taken down ; taken down by him who first erected them ; by him whose property they are ; therefore taken down with care, and laid by in security, so that not a pin of the whole shall be lost. Yes, my friends, these bodies must all be laid by, in that general repository, the grave, and undergo every change incident to corruption. There they must moulder to dust, and that dust be applied to different uses. Humbling consideration ; we shall perhaps lend our dust, to fill up the graves of our own children upon their demise. But that God, whose property we are, will not lose, will not suffer the grave to bereave him of any part of his fulness and glory. No, the earth shall cast forth its dead, and the grave make up its accounts with the Judge of all worlds.

Your tabernacles shall be rebuilt, and become houses that shall stand forever. Your bodies shall be raised in power and great glory, like unto the glorious body of the blessed Jesus, of which we can form but a very imperfect idea. Therefore the prophet calls to the inhabitants of the grave; "Awake and sing ye who dwell in the dust; for your dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out her dead *". Then shall the happy spirit take possession of its own body, made like to that of the Son of God, and forever and ever shine forth with Jesus in the kingdom of our Father.

Before I dismiss this head, I beg you will remember, that you and I, whether in a state of nature or of grace, must very soon quit these tabernacles. Then how dreadful to those who have no God, no Saviour to flee unto. A naked spirit turned out of the body, amidst the burning vengeance of an angry God, is a consideration too shocking for human thought long to contemplate. What then must it be for the sinner to endure! To such a one the resur-

*. Isaiah xxvi. 19.

resurrection will introduce fresh scenes of horror, and open deeper springs of remediless despair. Happy are ye who have an interest in Christ; for when the wicked, and all that forget God, are turned into hell, ye shall be clothed upon with your houses from heaven, and dwell eternally with the Lord that bought you to this salvation.

S E R M O N II.

2 Pet. i. 13. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance.

HAVING in the preceding discourse spoken of man as dwelling in a tabernacle, and pointed out some branches of spiritual instruction, imparted by this description, I shall now, according to my first proposal, attend to the special work of a gospel minister, as here described, “a stirring up of God’s people, by putting them in remembrance of the great and glorious things of grace and salvation.”—— Under this head two things naturally occur,

1. The work itself. A stirring up the people by putting them in remembrance.

2. The continuance, or term of this work. As long as in this tabernacle. In these two particulars the substance of the text seems to be included, and I shall attempt to speak to them severally, as the Lord shall give strength and liberty. And O that I may speak, and you hear, with that degree of seriousness, as if we knew assuredly,

assuredly, that this is our last opportunity of meeting together in the courts below. The

I. Thing to be attended to is ; the work of Christ's ministers, which is to stir up believers by putting them in remembrance. I say believers ; because unto formal professors, hypocrites and unbelievers in general, their message is very different. Even to cry against them because of their transgressions, and mourn over them because of their deplorable circumstances. We warn the unregenerate of their danger on account of sin ; of their need of a Saviour to redeem them from destruction ; of the necessity of a work of grace upon the soul to manifest their interest in the love of God ; and assure them, that nothing short of a divine change being wrought upon the heart, the will, and affections, can entitle them to the name of Christians. We admonish them to continue under the means of grace, and not to forsake the ministry of the word, as by so doing, by forsaking the external means they will aggravate their guilt, and enhance their own condemnation in the other world.

But with respect to believers our work
is

is different ; it is to stir them up by putting them in remembrance.

1. Of the early transactions of infinite love, from whence, as from so many springs of life, flow every present and future blessing. Even from everlasting, believers, the unchanging love of the great THREE IN ONE, was unalterably and immovably fixed upon you as its favoured objects *, when ye might have been passed by, and others been substituted for you. But of his own sovereign good pleasure, and merely according to his own council, he was pleased to choose you in Christ before the foundation of the world, that ye should be holy and without blame before him in love †. What will, what can be so likely to stir up believers to a conscientious regard to the things of God, and to make them studious to seek his glory in all things, as to see the council of peace sitting from all eternity, consulting their everlasting welfare, and laying the infallible plan of their final salvation ? Who can behold these invisible things of God for himself, and shall not say, “ O my God, I will praise thee

* Jer. xxxi. 3.

† Ephes. i. 4.

thee as long as I have being ; I will glorify thee whilst existence endures."

To see a well ordered covenant, firmly established, established upon my account, and containing all the blessings of my salvation ; finding myself endowed in Christ with all, and every spiritual good, and this good ratified in heaven, infinite ages before I was brought into existence, are motives to stir me up to the love and study of holiness, such as the reason of man could never have suggested, nor the wisdom of philosophy ever have devised. Motives, such as must have the most happy influence upon every soul who experienceth their power ; may your souls and mine for ever be stirred up by the remembrance of such amazing, such condescending transactions of everlasting goodness and grace.

In these transactions you have the only reason why you were not left to perish in a fallen state. For ye, yea all the elect fell in the common ruin ; but being chosen to salvation, ye were preserved in Christ when fallen in Adam, and in the day of power made willing to embrace eternal life, as the unconditional gift of God without

out money and without price. This discriminating act of grace, this plenitude of gospel beatitude, and the ample security we have for our enjoyment of them, ought to stir us up to the greatest and most implacable hatred of sin, and the warmest regard to the ways and works of the holy Redeemer. In this view of things, surely God must be more to the believer than he is to the world ; and his love must be such as cannot be expected from worldlings ; especially as he stands in Christ, justified from all things, from which he could not have been justified by the law of Moses, either moral or ceremonial. Their persons accepted, their nature changed, their felicity secured, how great are their obligations to love, to fear, to adore and serve him, who has called them out of darkness into marvellous light ?

Having not only loved you, and given himself for you, that he might purge you from all iniquity, but hath actually met with you, when on the broad way to death and destruction, and happily conquered your hearts by the allurements of his person, and the power of his grace. By his
holy

holy Spirit he hath quickened you when dead ; shewed you your danger when secure in your sins, drawn you to himself when yet afar off from God and godliness ; he hath wrought a vital faith in your hearts, and taught you to venture your souls upon him for life and salvation, to live a life of faith upon his person, blood and righteousness, and to be strong only in the grace that is in him. This work is wrought in every believing heart in its measure ; is the workmanship of the Holy Spirit given to you, and alone is evidential of your sonship and relation to the head of the church, without which no man has a right to assert, that Jesus died as his representative.

Every benefit, blessing and privilege, every Christian virtue wrought in the heart, and every part of the perfect, finished plan of salvation, being entirely of God and not of ourselves, loudly calls upon us to remember the rock from whence we were hewn, and the spring from whence we derive all spiritual supplies : to take heed to our tempers, our ways and conversations, always remembering, that as the divine life consists in the knowledge of God in Christ,

so

so it is the property of it to breathe after the enjoyment of him. O Sirs, when this life is wrought in you, it will make you forsake all outward sin, and lothe the ways in which ye formerly delighted. Old things and old company will be done away, and behold all things shall become new. You will have new affections, new desires, and new ways, even the ways of wisdom which are pleasantness and peace. You will see a beauty and glory in Christ and holiness, will have such a delight as you never before enjoyed in the people, worship, and doctrines of God your Saviour, whilst at the same time you abhor yourselves, and repent in dust and ashes. Your souls shall possess a gospel hope, and each of you, in your better moments shall say, I shall behold his face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake in his likeness. Yet shall you be convinced that grace does not immediately eradicate sin, but that its dreadful workings shall make you adopt Paul's words, and exclaim "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death," finding the danger of being carried away from the paths
of

of holiness, by its horrid and deadly influence.

Farther, daily experience will shew you that there is not, that there cannot be any hope for you but in Christ, from your first awakenings to your dying moment. The frequent conflicts, the constant war between the old and new man in your souls; the lustings of the flesh against the spirit, the striving of the law in your members against the law in your minds, will teach you your own nothingness and insufficiency, so that you will dare to have no confidence in yourselves. It is to this end of our own mortification, that God may discover to us our exceeding vileness, he is pleased to suffer us to be foiled by our own inbred corruptions, and to teach us to watch against the evils of sin within us, accounting our own hearts as our greatest and most dangerous enemies. Should it be at all thought strange that the old-man, the seed of the serpent, inspired with all the subtilty of its accursed parent, should be an over-match for the new-man when gracious communications are withheld, and we sustain the assault in the strength only

only of grace received. But when foiled, and sin has obtained the ascendancy over grace for a time, how discouraging are our apprehensions, and how ready are we to give into fear and despondency, ready to give up all, saying, "It is in vain for us to wait on the Lord any longer; if he regarded us, he would not suffer our corruptions to prevail."

This, believers, has been your frequent experience, and you have found that in deepest distress for sin, it has pleased God to break in upon the soul, with some precious word of grace, saying, "Fear not I am with thee, be not dismayed for I am thy God." Then joy, life and vigour, inspire the heart, and sin seems to be dead, or at least asleep; then how apt are we to let down our watch, become careless, and give the enemy an advantage over us? That ever-watchful adversary knows well how to improve our unguardedness to our disadvantage; he gains access to the mind afresh, draws away the soul from God and Christ, to seek other lovers, till new guilt is contracted, and we are become as comfortless as ever. Thus it is frequently with
us,

us, either by the favour of the Lord, our mountain seems to stand strong, and we dread no evil from without, or from within, or he hideth himself because of our unwatchfulness, and we are troubled on account of our iniquity : dragging heavily on in the means of grace, perhaps under much coolness as well as disquietude of soul ; only now and then breathing forth some such ejaculation as this, “ O that I knew where I might find him.”——Thus we continue, till the Holy Ghost is pleased to breathe afresh upon our withered frame, and cause us to stretch our desires for Christ anew, and thus the soul may be said to be born of God from above, ten thousand times in the course of experience. O what manner of love is here manifested ! What tenderneſs ! What forbearance ! And O, what manner of people ought we to be in all watchfulness, and holiness of conversation ?

II. As it is the duty of gospel ministers to put believers in mind of the deep and great things of God ; the design of this putting you in remembrance, is to stir up to the following things.

C

I. A

1. A firm attachment to the doctrines of the gospel.

2. A conscientious attendance on the ordinances of grace.

3. A strict adherence to scripture discipline in the church.

1. It is the duty of gospel ministers to stir up their people, to a firm attachment to the doctrines of the gospel; to hold fast the form of sound words, delivered to us in the New Testament, of which time and strength will permit me to give you only a specimen, and that too only of some of the most capital of them, leaving the rest to your own recollection.

There is first the being of God, which is an article even in natural religion, and to be adhered to by all who value the precious blessings of new covenant goodness. Of the greatest use to the feeble followers of the Lord Jesus Christ in their militant estate of tribulation. They that come to him must believe that he is; that he is, in all respects, such a God as they stand in need of; such a Being as they would wish to worship. Little good can redound to those who worship in the spirit of the Athenians,

thenians, who worshipped they knew not what ; or, which is the same thing, who worshipped a God unknown. He is revealed in the system of his grace, clothed with every perfection that can render him amiable in the eye of a sanctified sinner ; every attribute that can render his name a suitable dwelling-place for the poor and needy. Are you helpless and weak, unable to perform duty, to withstand temptation, and make head against your own corruptions ? Remember that he is the strong God, whose Almighty arm sustains the vast frame of universal nature, and that this arm is underneath his church, and all its feeble members. By the strength of his arm he bore his people all the days of old ; by the same undecaying power he now bears them up under all their infirmities, and hath engaged thus to keep them through faith unto final salvation, that their end may be eternal life. In all your doubts and temptations to despondency, instead of reasoning with flesh and blood, look therefore, to the rock from whence you were hewn ; cast your burden upon Omnipotence itself, assured

that God, whose all-powerful arm has delivered you thus far, is still able to deliver, and to save to the uttermost all that come to him for life and safety.

In many cases the remembrance of his infinite wisdom is reviving, as a cordial to the drooping heart. You are frequently perplexed; at your wits end, and know not what to do to secure yourselves from danger, to extricate yourselves from particular troubles, or to surmount the difficulties which stand in your way; and from what quarter do you derive relief, save from the wisdom of God, taken in connection with his goodness and grace. That he can point out a way in the most difficult wilderness is beyond a doubt, with those who believe his existence: that he will point out the way when sought unto, is also clear from the direction of the Holy Ghost. “* If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth unto all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.” The safety of the saints in choosing the right way being wholly dependant upon the wisdom of God, we cannot

* Jam. i. 7.

cannot too frequently contemplate that blessed perfection, nor can your ministers too frequently put you in remembrance, of Israel's leader being infinitely wise to direct, as well as all-powerful to sustain you in your way, be it less or more difficult or dangerous. When surrounded with wants, and all within is emptiness; when oppressed by temptation, and groaning under the body of death; when sinking in deep waters, and the iniquity of my heels compasseth me about, my only comfort arises from this single consideration, "my God liveth, my God reigneth, and is perfectly acquainted with all my affliction and sorrow." So far is the Christian man from wishing to be concealed from the all-seeing eye of God, that it is his joy and pleasure, that the Lord sees the thoughts, and tries the reins of all the children of men: that all lie disclosed to the view of his God and Father.

What is said of the power and wisdom of God is equally true of his omnipresence and eternity; every perfection of Deity being manifested in the flesh of Jesus, opens up springs of everlasting delight and

consolation in Zion ; of perpetual pleasure to all that have embraced the heavenly Redeemer. But O ! What a terrible consideration is this to the wicked ? There is a God ; — an infinitely holy God, who cannot connive at sin ; — an omniscient God, from whose observation nothing can escape ; — an all-powerful God, able to destroy the workers of iniquity ; — an omnipresent God, from whose avenging arm there is no escaping ! Hear this ye lovers of sin, and tremble at the Majesty of God : ye lovers of false pleasure, reflect on your approaching doom. You must die, you must stand before this God, with whom is terrible Majesty ; you must be judged according to his infinite holiness. And how will you bear that dreadful sentence, depart ye cursed ? How will you bear to be driven from the judgment-seat with whips of scorpions ; and be sent down to dwell in the flames of wrath for ever ? But these things you must bear, if you live and die in a state of unbelief, and alienation from God. May grace avert that awful condemnation, that it fall not upon you ! May you know the things that make for your peace before
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time with you shall be no more. But, whether you hear or not, it is my duty to warn you of your danger, and to point out to you that wrath which is to come upon the children of disobedience.

Secondly, it being the duty of gospel ministers to stir up their hearers to hold fast the form of sound words ; it is mine in particular to put you in remembrance of that blessed truth, that, “ There are three that bear record in heaven, the FATHER, the WORD and the SPIRIT ;” and to stir you up, “ That your hearts may be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the MYSTERY of God, and of the FATHER, and of CHRIST*.” I do not mean to put you upon comprehending of it, for then it would cease to be a mystery, but to a warm attachment to it as a *mystery*, and therefore above your comprehension, consequently incapable of other definition than what the Holy Ghost has given of it in the inspired volume. That there are three personally distinct, yet essentially

essentially one, has not only been the belief of the church from the first opening of the gospel dispensation, but is the doctrine of the whole word of God, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation; therefore not to be given up by us in the latter days, how different soever it may be from the doctrines of modern divines.

That there are three that bear record in heaven, &c. is the foundation doctrine, upon which the whole fabric of gospel truth is built, and without which the beautiful scheme of grace must be annihilated. The gospel itself being none other than a blessed declaration of the several parts acted by the three divine persons in the Godhead, in the great work of man's redemption and salvation, each of which parts is essential to the whole system of mercy. Therefore if we lose sight of the Trinity of persons operating in man's behalf, we must unavoidably lose sight also of salvation itself. Hence the greater part of Unitarians totally reject, as absurd, every doctrine of gospel salvation; and are therefore more consistent with themselves than

than the Sabellians, who pretend to adhere to the doctrines of grace, and yet absurdly reject that of three divine persons in one Jehovah.

But whatever cavillers and sceptics may alledge against this blessed truth, nothing can be more plain, than that the volume of inspiration opens with that mystery of the Trinity. Gen. i. 26. And God said, "let us make man after our likeness"; To whom did the most high make this address? Not to angels; for they could not put one finger to the work of creation—Not to the human soul of Christ; for that never did, nor could create. God is indeed said to have made all things by Jesus Christ. But surely not by his human nature, for that would be to deify the humanity, seeing creation-work is proper to God only. I grant that Christ from eternity sustained the character of God-man, being as mediator set up from everlasting; yet did not his human nature actually exist, for he is not the first, but second Adam, and was after the first. The pre-existence of the Christ's humanity was only in the mind of God, and is here considered in
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the choice of electing grace, and in the covenant of redemption, which refers not only to the human soul, but to the corporeal body of Christ, as well as his obedience, sufferings and death, as the springs of our salvation. Hence the blood of the Saviour is called the blood of the Covenant, and is considered as the bond which secures salvation to his people, being shed by their representative or substitute. On this score it was the Old Testament saints went to heaven, and the glory of their salvation was ascribed to the lamb slain from the foundation of the world; and this glory he had before saints and angels, prior to his incarnation. This is that glory, for the restitution of which he prayed, it having been veiled in the days of his humiliation.

But that the human soul of Christ was not the creator of all things, as some have thought, from Coll. i. 16. is clear from this single consideration. If by his human soul all things were made, then it must follow that it made itself, seeing the humanity of Jesus is as much creaturely as any other being, and he is as truly man as
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he is properly God. As man, he is a creaturely limited and circumscribed being ; even when as God, he is the maker of all things, and every where present, according to his own testimony ; “ Where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them to bless them”. Thus, although the heavens have received his human frame till the restitution of all things, lo ! as God, or as a divine person, he is with his people always, even to the end of the world.

From these, and other considerations of like import, I must consider that of Gen. i. 26. not as an address of Deity to the pre-existent human soul of Christ, but as expressive of the divine council of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The same doctrine runs through the whole of revelation, was preached by the prophets, by Jesus and his Apostles, therefore not to be departed from by those who wish to avoid making shipwreck of the faith. Nor does this blessed truth at all violate the Unity of the divine essence, seeing these three are no where represented as distinct essences ; but three persons in
one

one undivided, and indivisible Godhead. Neither is this inconsistent with reason, as some alledge, seeing creature existence furnisheth instances enough of three being one, and one three, as is evident from light, heat and motion in the fire; soul body and spirit in the human constitution. Nor are these barely three distinct characters, or names of offices, but three separate principles or subsistences essential to the being of man, who himself is created in the image of God. By which we are probably taught, that God exists essentially in Father, Word, and Holy Ghost; even as man, his image, subsists in three distinct constituent principles, soul, body and spirit. I may farther observe upon this article, that, because of these subsistencies in man, the unity of human existence was never called in question; neither ought that of the divine essence, on account of the distinct personalities subsisting therein. For by the same reason we allow the unity of the one, we certainly ought to allow that of the other, unless we are bent altogether to drop parity of reason.

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That the Father and Son are distinct persons the very names suppose, he that begetteth being undoubtedly different from him that is begotten : and he that is begotten, may very well be said to be the express image of him who begetteth. On this account it is, Jesus is said to be the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person *, being the outward and visible image of the invisible Godhead.

The *Holy Ghost*, the third, in order, of the Trinity, is frequently mentioned as a distinct person subsisting in Deity ; and as such hath divine, personal properties, and divine worship ascribed to him. “ I, saith Christ, will pray the Father, and he shall send you another Comforter.” Here is evidently one that prays, another that is prayed unto ; one that is to send, and another who is to be sent as the Comforter. And surely he who is sent can never be the same identical person with him who sendeth him ; wherefore we are under a necessity of considering the Comforter as a distinct person in Deity, and they must

* Or, as the word may be rendered, of his perfection.

war against common sense, as well as sound religion, who take upon them to deny it.

The Deity of the holy Spirit is as clearly held forth in scripture as his personality, and is of equal importance to the Christian faith. Ananias and Sapphira are said to have lied to the Holy Ghost, and to have lied unto God; plainly intimating, if words have any meaning, that the Holy Ghost to whom they lied is truly and properly God, especially as it is elsewhere said of believers, that their bodies are the temples of God, because the Holy Ghost dwells in them, therefore they are an habitation for God through the spirit. The whole of salvation work in the saints, is ascribed to him as a divine agent, even as that of redemption is ascribed to the word who was made flesh and dwelt among us, which shews the exertion of an equal power, and a title to equal glory, as arising out of the salvation of the sinner. It is his province to quicken the dead soul, to alarm the secure conscience, by enlightening the dark and ignorant understanding; his to bring low the lofty look of legal pride, to bend the stubborn will, so as to submit to the righteousness

teousness of Christ; his to regulate the passions, to sanctify the desires, to take the things of the Father and of Christ, and to show them to us.

Thus we see, that the grand foundation of our Christian system is, there are three that bear record in Heaven, and these three are one; not one in person and mode of existence, but one in essence, distinct in personality. In all respects equally independent, eternal, and possessor of every attribute of divinity, and therefore equal in power and glory. Without precedence or superiority, farther than order required in the œconomy of man's salvation, in which the choice of the elect is ascribed principally to the Father, redemption to the Son, and sanctification to the blessed eternal Spirit.

Now as my professed view upon this occasion is, barely, to stir up your pure minds by putting you in remembrance, it would be inconsistent with my plan of discourse to enter into an elaborate discussion of the doctrine, important as it is. I shall therefore dismiss this head, and with it finish the present discourse, only observing farther,

ther, that to deny the personal agency of the Holy Spirit, would be the same in effect, as to shut the gates of salvation against ourselves, seeing no man can know the deep things of God but by the Spirit; nor can we see the things which appertain to Jesus, unless they are shown unto us by the Comforter; and cannot so much as call him the Christ, but by the Holy Ghost.

SERMON

S E R M O N III.

2 Pet. i. 13. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance.

BEING once more brought forth to preach the word, though in a state of the greatest weakness, and the emaciated state of this frail tabernacle assuring me, that but a very few times more, if indeed at all, I shall enter this pulpit; I shall resume the subject I was last upon. I would put you my dear charge, the church, with which I have the honour to stand related, in remembrance of that blessed truth, on which my hope has for many years been suspended, and without which my poor soul now finding my body no longer tenable, must sink into absolute, into utter despair. I speak of the divinity of our only Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that blessed and immovable foundation of gospel hope and dependance.

I have no cause to fear the stability of your faith in a doctrine so indispensibly necessary; but if the apostolic church had need to be reminded of the doctrines they

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had received, how much more we, at this distant period ; we upon whom the ends of the world are come ? Besides, after I am gone, and my eyes closed in dust, it may so happen, that there may come amongst you those, who shall publish dreadful heresies, therefore I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance of the divinity of that Saviour in whom you trust.

Were he but a mere man like yourselves, as the Socinians affirm, you would fall under that malediction, Jer. xvii. 5. " Cursed is man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." A consideration terrible to a sensible mind ; enough to awe the soul from every creature-dependance. If the Saviour is but a man, and as such trusted in, must not those who thus trust in him either be in the greatest danger, or this scripture be entirely without meaning ? Were he but man, and not God, he could not be mighty to save, and consequently he could be no Saviour for the helpless. His blood could never atone for my sin ; his righteousness could not justify my person.

on. I stand in need of an all-sufficient Saviour, able to save to the uttermost ; able to atone for my sin, and to justify my person before the infinitely holy God, before whom an unclean sinner cannot dwell.

But if I behold my only Redeemer as full of grace and truth, the blessed Immanuel, God with us, upon our side, and in our nature, I am then led by the drawings of gratitude to worship him even as I worship the Father. If I consider him as Jehovah's fellow and equal ; all-powerful to support, as well as every where present to discern all my circumstances, I at once tremble at his Reverend Name, and rejoice in his highness.

I may be bold to assert, that never yet was there a man who was led into the glory and spirituality of the eternal law, and who at the same time believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, as but merely a man like himself. This discovery of the law, gives such a sense of personal wretchedness, as will convince any man, that no Saviour, who is not divine, can be adequate to his circumstances. The whole indeed, the strong, the active and working man, the man

of virtue and philosophy, may rave about a Saviour who is not God : but the wretched and indigent must have an Immanuel, upon whom to found their hope.

You may see the wretched shifts which those who deny the Deity of Christ are put to, in order to support their unmeaning and irrational scheme. They are obliged to deny the fall of man, notwithstanding it is proclaimed by every infant of four or five months old ; to deny the weakness and incapacity of man to fulfil the tenor of the moral law, notwithstanding the commandment is very, even exceeding broad. In flat contradiction to scripture testimonies, they are even forced to renounce all dependance on the obedience and death of the Lord Jesus Christ : rightly concluding, that if he is but a man like themselves, his obedience and death could avail no more than their own.

The case stands thus ; we are all the descendants of a guilty, an apostate parent. This parent was the representative, and federal head of all his posterity, and in him they were all considered. He fell by transgression : they fell with him, in virtue

tue of their relation to him, for in Adam all died, morally. Thus fallen, it remains to shew, whether any part of them can be made alive but by Jesus Christ; and whether Jesus Christ could make any part of them alive, on supposition he were but a mere creature. Man being thus fallen, one of these things must necessarily follow.

(1) The curse must have an effectual and free course upon every individual in his own person; which it hath not had, seeing some have been saved. Or (2) The lawgiver must depart from his word in which he declares, that "the soul that sinneth shall die; and that he is cursed, who continueth not in all things written in the law to do them," notwithstanding he hath declared that his counsel shall stand. Otherwise, (3) The sin of those who shall be saved is punished to its utmost demerit in the person of their substitute.

If their sin is thus punished, as Paul testifies, "He who knew no sin, hath he made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;" he who was their substitute, who died for them whilst ungodly, must necessarily be a per-

son of infinite importance ; and this he could not possibly be, unless he were possessed of the divine nature. Either sin must have been amply atoned by a sacrifice infinitely valuable, or the legislator have suffered loss. To suppose the latter, would dishonour that God, who speaketh the word and it standeth fast, and is not yea and nay like the words of ever-changing man. We must therefore admit the former, and conclude, that if Jesus had not been a divine person, he could not have made an atonement for our sins and rebellions.

I need not add, that divine names and works are ascribed to our Immanuel ; which ascriptions, were he not truly and properly God, must be absolutely without any meaning at all. It shall suffice that I observe, no work is ascribed to the Father, but what is also ascribed to the Son, either by himself, or by his apostles speaking by his spirit and under his direction. And moreover, that he wrought all his miracles by his own personal authority, without any dependance on a being superior to himself. The divinity

vinity of Christ must either be supported, or the whole gospel sinks into a non-entity, and no salvation is left for the lost and perishing.

ANOTHER THING I must beg leave to put you in remembrance of, notwithstanding your daily experience, I doubt not, furnishes you with very convincing evidences of its truth. I mean the fall of man, upon which I have already a little glanced, but not with that minuteness, the nature of the subject requires. That in Adam all died, is a truth to which the brightest evidence is given in scripture, a truth which every infant born into the world proclaims, and which every Christian has the sad experience of in the deceitfulness and depravity of his own nature; which he finds backward to all that is good, and prone to all that is evil. Now, if the fountain was not polluted, how came the streams to be defiled? Or if the root continued pure, how could the fruit be viciated. The general depravity of mankind is enough of itself to declare the certainty of Adam's transgression. A transgression productive of the most sad effects.

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Hereby was lost, entirely lost—primitive righteousness, and holiness, all communion with God, as a good and faithful Creator, all access to the throne of infinite holiness; to this precious intercourse with heaven and its adorable Lord and Maker, succeeded a league with hell and slavery to the powers of darkness. A deaf ear was turned to the voice of the divine threatening, and a willing attention to the insinuations of the grand seducer. Hatred of good took place of moral obedience, and enmity to God sat enthroned on the human heart, insomuch that all the thoughts and imaginations of the heart of man were only evil, and that continually. Here was a privation of all that is morally good, and an accession of all that is evil: a total alienation from the law-giving Creator, and an entire subjection to the powers of darkness, the tyranny of sin, and slavery of carnal enmity.

This gave occasion to these and such like sayings, “ All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way.” “ I was shapen in sin, and in iniquity did my mother conceive me.” “ In
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Adam all died." " By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," &c. &c. So much, and a great deal more might be added, respecting the imputation of original transgression. We shall next quote that awful description of depraved humanity given by the apostle to the Romans, iii. 10, 18. There is none righteous, no not one : there is none that understandeth, none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doth good, no not one, &c. &c.

This, our sad and dreadful nature, when realized in the conscience, in our first awakenings, and conscience flies in our faces, upbraiding our sin and shame, makes awful confusion, and causes the whole soul to stand aghast. That awful voice, " Cursed is he that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them," thrilling through the heart, will remove every doubt about original sin, and our personal impotence to will and to do the good pleasure of the Lawgiver. In
such

such a case the gates of salvation must everlastingly have remained shut, if the angel of the covenant had not appeared, the sinners substitute, and helper of the needy.

Both guilt and pollution stood between heaven and the souls of men. Guilt must either be atoned or God would be unjust in accepting of the sinner as unrighteous, when indeed he is not righteous either relatively or really. Such acceptance must therefore have been altogether incompatible with the rectitude of God the lawgiver, and moral governor.

Besides, what would a polluted sinner do in the unsullied mansions of bliss and purity. In such a case, heaven itself would prove none other than an hell of misery to him, on account of the contrariety in his nature to the place of his dwelling. This shews the necessity of that regeneration preached by our Lord, in order to our entrance into the kingdom of God. He who considers searching the scriptures, prayer and praise as a burden now, could very ill endure the exercises of the upper world, where all is spiritual, all divine.

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I need not stir you up, to hold fast this affecting truth, seeing you who are spiritual, cannot possibly relinquish it, so long as you have a feeling of the body of death resting upon you, and making you groan daily as wretched. A bare mentioning thereof might therefore have been sufficient.

The everlasting love of God, and eternal election of the chosen in Christ, are truths reviled by some, but never, by us, to be forgotten, wherefore I may, with the strictest propriety, put you in remembrance of them before my departure.

By the chosen of God, the objects of everlasting love, I do not mean all men, but some only of all nations, peoples, kindreds, tongues, and languages, even all that shall ultimately be saved. There is indeed the common love and providential regard of God, which are unto all his works. These however are very distinct from that love of complacency which he expresses to his own Israel; "The only people whom he hath chosen for his portion and inheritance, and upon whom grace and glory were settled from everlasting;

lasting; of whom God hath said, " I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you. These people are foreknown with a distinguishing and approbatory knowledge; loved with an unalterable, free and uninfluenced love; chosen by an absolute, irreversible decree to compleat salvation: holiness here, and happiness hereafter; are justified freely from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.

These are the people said to be chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world, who were preserved in Christ even when fallen in Adam, in virtue of union with him as their covenant head of eminence and influence; by whom their redemption was wrought out in the fulness of time, and their hearts made willing in the day of his power; willing to embrace him as the only Redeemer, and to rest in his obedience as the ground of their justification before their Maker.

O sensible sinners! with what delight, and holy confidence may you contemplate the sovereign, and unalterable emanations
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of the love of God, from which springs all your felicity? That believers in Jesus are now the objects of divine loving-kindness none pretend to deny; and they themselves with astonishment say, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God?"

But it is more staggering to human wisdom, more offensive to the pride of man, to declare that this divine love was equally fervent, even when they were dead in trespasses and sins, as when exalted to the highest glories of the upper world, or prior to their fall in Adam. This consideration rapt the soul of the apostle in astonishment, so that he cries out, "God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us, *even* when we were *dead in sins*, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace are ye saved) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; * "Well might he, well may we cry out," O the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths of the love of God!"

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* Ephes. ii. 4, 5, 6.

The scriptures abound with proofs of the love of God to his church, while they were yet sinners: but one instance only will be sufficient for the present purpose; “God so loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*.” This gift of love was made when the whole race of mankind lay in wickedness: for “when we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly;” and hereby it was, “that God commendeth the greatness of his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us”.

From these considerations it clearly appears, that the love of God, which is the cause of election, is infinite in degree, eternal in its duration, and unchangeably the same forevermore. Under the fall, when enemies in our hearts by wicked works against God, the same as before the fall in the state of creatureship; and then the same as in the world of glory; eternally superior to all influence arising from either the holiness or iniquity of his creature.

* John iii. 16.

ture. And surely it is absurd in poor sinful creatures to deny a sovereign God the right of making out of the lump of humanity, as many vessels to honour, as infinite wisdom did direct.

Surely God has a right to determine for himself, whether Jacob or Esau shall be his favourite, whilst they are yet in their mother's womb, having done neither good nor evil. And to confirm his own purpose according to election, by giving preference to the younger, and setting him above the elder born. Yea, who dare charge the Judge of all with doing wrong, when he says, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated?" It is awful presumption, even in such a case, to say unto him, "What dost thou?"

The doctrine of election and immutable love thus stated, implies that of eternal union between Christ and his church. An union absolutely necessary to spiritual communion and communication; for were there no union, there could be no communication of vital influence on his part, nor of the baleful effects of sin on ours. If at all chosen, you were thus chosen *in* Christ,

Christ, and not in your own persons : and can a person be chosen in Christ, without standing in some kind of personal relation to him ? To assert he may, is a contradiction in terms, and will pass for truth with none who is taught by the word and spirit of the living God. When the church is considered as chosen, it is always as standing in connection with the covenant head ; for to talk of members without a head is as mere a solecism, as of an head without members would be monstrous.

But for this union between Christ, the head, and the elect, members of his mystical body, his people could derive from him no quickening, comforting or sealing influences, as there can be no conveyance without a proper channel, and no such channel there could be, without a personal relation. If it were asked, why the sufferings of Christ were not available for fallen angels, at the same time they are the spring of hope to the sensible sinner ? The answer is, “ Because he took not on him the nature of angels, and consequently there was no relation subsisting between him and them. If farther it is asked, how his death

death hath an happy influence upon the salvation of some men and not upon all? The answer is, because he took upon him the seed of Abraham. The seed of Abraham is the election of grace, and therefore between Christ and them only, a personal union doth subsist, and they only of consequence receive the benefits of his salvation.

In virtue of this vital union between him and his people they receive every blessing of grace here, and of glory hereafter; all out of that fulness it hath pleased the Father to lay up in Jesus, in whom is hid the believer's life, with all its appurtenances and appendages. This shews the vitality of the divine union between Christ and his people, even prior to faith or conversion, seeing without such an union, communications such as these could never have obtained, could never have at all have been experienced. Nor is there any thing absurd in supposing, that a vital union should subsist betwixt Jesus the living head, and the members of his mystical body when dead in sin, seeing

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nothing in themselves, nothing performed by them is its bond or condition.

In the day of calling grace, that set time to favour, this union operates in a way of communication. The free spirit is given to convince the soul of sin, of righteousness and of judgment; the man is made alive, the understanding is enlightened, the conscience is alarmed, the will renewed, the passions rendered orderly, and subjected to the influences of religion, the affections sanctified and made spiritual. And it may be added, that from this vital union arises all the believer's assurance of immortal life and glory; because he ever lives to make intercession for us, we hope to be saved to the very uttermost; and because he lives, in virtue of that life which is in him we hope to live also. Nothing doubting, but as sure as Jesus arose from the dead, we shall be raised up together to sit with him in heavenly places, and to walk with him in white in the city of the New Jerusalem.

What has been said upon this subject may serve to reprove two classes of men diametrically opposite; I mean the blind
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race of Hagar, the sons of the ancient pharisees, who, like all their ancestors, build their hope of eternal life upon fulfilling the conditions of the legal covenant on one hand, and the licentious sons of libertinism on the other. The first of these have no notion at all of a crucified Redeemer, of his atoning blood and perfect righteousness, as the only grounds of the sinner's hope of acceptance with God, and consequently can see no need of communications from him for the purposes of either justification or sanctification. The latter talk of union with Christ; but such an union as is certainly dead in its kind, seeing, according to them, it admits not of communications of grace from him to renew the heart, and to make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance with those that are sanctified. Not considering that without personal, as well as relative holiness, no man shall see the Lord. That there is as much need from this consideration to have the nature changed and purified by faith, as to have the person justified and accepted; that a meetness for, is to all intents and purposes necessary, as a

title to heaven. Now the first of these is wrought by the grace and spirit of Christ, even as the last is obtained by his obedience unto death. Who can dwell with Christ, who is not made like unto him, and meet for a dwelling-place infinitely holy? Who can be made meet for the enjoyment of, by likeness to Jesus, by any other agency than that of the spirit, in the gospel of Christ? And how can the spirit of Jesus be communicated without a previous union subsisting between them and him, from, and by whom he is communicated? What union in nature soever subsists between the elder brother, and the younger brethren in the same family; between a father and his children; or a husband and his wife; the same union in a way of grace, subsisted from all eternity between Christ and his people. In as much as he who sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are one. And upon this doctrine, if I am not greatly mistaken, depend all our comfort and communion with God.

I mean not to insinuate, however, that this comfort and communion depend upon
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the knowledge and belief of the doctrine of union. No, for the child of grace may be alive, yet remain long in a state of weakness after quickning, and for a season may be of such imperfect knowledge, as to see men only as trees walking: even when the mere speculatist, who knows the gospel but in theory, shall be distinct and clear in every point of theological controversy. Observation shews, that on one hand we shall see holiness of life, and spirituality of frame sometimes joined with a very imperfect understanding; and on the other, we shall see clearness of head very frequently attended with unfruitfulness of heart and conversation. Babes in grace, though young in knowledge, are as really believers, and heirs of glory, as young men and fathers who have overcome the wicked one, who have an unction from the holy one, by which they know all things.

But although christian comfort is not suspended upon our knowledge of that blessed doctrine, it is suspended upon the doctrine itself, seeing there can be no communication where there is not an union

previously subsisting. Neither could a poor sinner ever have received advantage from the sufferings and death of Christ, if prior thereunto he had not been bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. But if the member is of the body, and so is united with the head; if the branch is in the tree, and so united to the root, it is easy to see how naturally influence may be communicated to them. Which leads me

To put you in mind of your own regeneration, for you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins; that you might personally be raised up to sit with Jesus in heavenly places; it having been declared, "that except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." This blessed work, so indispensibly necessary to salvation, is effected by the Holy Ghost, that divine Comforter sent by Jesus to lead his people into all truth. Becoming in the heart a quickening spirit, he discovers his in-dwelling, by convincing of sin actual and original in its defilement and malignity, its nature and penal consequences. The mean of which conviction, as we are told by the apostle,

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is the holy moral law set home to the conscience in its power, and opened in its spirituality to the understanding; by which discovery the law appears exceeding broad, and sin exceeding sinful. He convinceth of the righteousness of both the legal precept and penalty; of the necessity of a perfect righteousness to save from its flaming curse, and of his own total want of any thing that may be called by that name, wherefore the soul becomes guilty before God, and exclaims, "Behold I am vile, shapen in sin, and brought forth in iniquity; from the crown of the head to the soles of the feet there is no soundness in me, but I am full of wounds, bruises, and putrifying sores; God be merciful to me a sinner; save, Lord, I perish." For the holy Spirit convinceth of judgment to come in its certainty, strictness, severity, and the impossibility of escaping it unless found in Jesus, clothed in the perfection of his righteousness, by which alone a man can be justified before God from all things, from which we cannot be justified by the law of Moses. Thus it is that he reduceth the soul to the obedience of faith, and

makes the sinner willing to be saved by Christ ; or, in other words, to submit to the righteousness of God. This work is effected not by the spirit without the word, nor by the word without the spirit, but by the spirit in the word, or by the word as the mean, in the hand of the spirit as the efficient. Thus in the ministry of the word, the Holy Ghost, as an heavenly wind, bloweth when, where, and upon whomsoever he listeth, in a manner which none can understand, save those who are the happy subjects of his heavenly breathings.

7. Free justification through the righteousness of Christ is another thing of which I would put you in remembrance, and warn you to maintain against the vain boastings of self-justiciaries. Justification is a forensic term, and implies not only the pardon of the guilty, but the acceptance of his person as righteous, and therefore is matter of law and justice, as well as an act of grace. Pardon may be given without justification among men. The rebel, for instance, may be pardoned, that is, suffered to live, who is never received
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into the favour of the king and his ministers. But in the present case pardon supposes justification, and justification always implies pardon, and enables the church to say, "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." Justification is either in the sight of God, in our own consciences, or before men. The first of these is an immanent eternal act of God's grace, merely on account of Christ's redemption, and is coeval with his own existence. The second is the work of his holy Spirit upon the heart, and takes place when Christ is revealed to the soul as the hope of glory; when the soul can cheerfully commit unto him all its everlasting concerns, then can he see that all his sins were laid upon the heavenly substitute, and that God is well pleased for his righteousness sake, who hath magnified the law, and made it honourable; so that this justification may very well be considered as none other than a manifestation of the former. The third is before men, by good works, or an holy conversation, which justifies not our persons, but our faith and profession, the one as divine, and the other unfeigned.

unfeigned. Hence James says, "Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works," because faith without works is dead, and has not a living object. As that in the sinners conscience is a manifestation of that act of grace, whereby God imputeth to us the Redeemer's righteousness ; this before men is the evidence of both, and will as naturally proceed from them as light from the sun, or water flow from the fountain. Let this therefore be your care, my dearly beloved, that whilst you contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, no man may, from the unguardedness of your conversation, have reason to question your sincerity. And O, may God help you to imitate the great apostle, in exercising yourselves daily to maintain consciences void of offence both before God and man ; that it may appear to all men, that the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath taught you to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world ; through which you shall be brought, for I am,

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8thly, To put you in remembrance of this blessed truth, that whom the Lord loveth he loveth to the end : and I may say with the apostle, I am confident of this very thing, that where God hath begun a good work, he will perform it unto the day of Christ ; consequently his believing people shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. To clear this matter a little up, be it observed, that the work of grace upon the heart is in every sense a good work, and the work of an infinite agent. The various names which it bears in scripture, evidence this truth. — It is a quickening ; you hath he quickened — It is regeneration, or a being born again, John iii. 3. — It is resurrection from the dead ; for we are raised with him to newness of life — It consists in a good change wrought upon the heart, will and affections — and produceth good effects — It implants good principles, enlightens the understanding, renews the will, spiritualizeth the affections, and regulates the passions, as well as awakens the conscience. It makes good masters, good servants, good parents and good children, tho'

tho' even but begun ; and it ultimately terminates in great happiness to the party, and great glory to the divine efficient.——

This good work is begun in every believer, even in the very meanest and most young in experience ; and it is comparatively but begun in the greatest of the Lord's saints. But being begun it shall be carried on, it shall be finished, or performed even to the day of death, even to the day of judgment, here called the day of Christ, because it is the day of his revelation to all men as the Judge of quick and dead. If asked, how it appears that this good work shall be carried on ? It may be answered,

From the nature of the work itself—It is a well of living water, springing up into everlasting life. If a well it is not a stream.—If springing up it cannot stagnate, neither go downwards.—If springing up to life, it cannot terminate in death —If to everlasting life, surely not to everlasting death.—It is the seed of God, therefore is of his own nature, and said to be incorruptible. — Now if incorruptible, how should it perish ? Can that be incorruptible

ble which is liable to perish ? Surely no.—
It is the seed of eternal life ; nay, it is eternal life itself. That therefore which is liable to be cut off is not the good work of an holy and gracious God, who is of one mind, and cannot be turned.

Moreover, the perfections of Deity are all engaged to perform this good work, as might be shewn at large, did strength and time admit of it. The love of God is as unchangeable as his nature, therefore being once fixed, it rests and never removes ; consequently whom he loves, he loves to the end. What his love proposes, his power is all-sufficient to execute, for who can stay his hand, or say unto him what doest there ? Shall principalities or powers, or life or death, or things present, or things to come, or any other creature turn his love away, seeing he is the Omnipotent ? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.—His mercy is boundless ; he knows how to forgive, and to heal the backslidings of his people, and restore them to the beauty of holiness, and the joys of his salvation.—But above all, the perseverance of the saints depends

depends upon their union with Jesus, as their covenant head and representative. If the head lives, surely the members shall not die. Because I live, saith he, ye shall live also. If a loving husband has it in his power to prevent it, he will not surely suffer his spouse to be ruined. He died that we might live forever ; he lives that we should never die.—It may be farther added, in confirmation of this truth, that the performing of this good work is entirely dependant on him by whom it was begun. He who hath begun a good work will perform it.—God does not begin a good work and leave it to man to finish ; but is himself the finisher as well as the author.—As the foundation is laid in grace, the structure reared by grace to restore the headstone shall be brought forth by grace ; let us with united voices cry grace—grace—unto it. This is a spring of consolation in the darkest days, even in the greatest adversity, that every believer shall be kept by the mighty power of God, through faith unto salvation, so that Jesus will not lose one of all whom the Father hath given unto him ; but that as he died their substitute, he shall have the satisfaction of

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rejoicing over them in the kingdom of glory.

These are some of the leading truths of the everlasting gospel, of which it is my duty to put you in remembrance, and which have the utmost influence on your soul concerns, and which may God the Spirit write upon all our hearts, as with a pen of iron, and point of a diamond. Time and strength both failing, I must omit the farther prosecution of the subject till a future opportunity, and commit what has been delivered to the blessing of the Lord.

N. B. The subject is no farther prosecuted in the author's notes.

F I N I S.

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